CLAIMS OF THE INVENTION

I CLAIM:

1. A method of utilizing a voucher in a gaming system comprising the steps of:

issuing at least one voucher having a particular value associated therewith;

accepting at a gaming machine said at least one voucher and crediting said value to a player of said machine;

generating a record regarding said at least one accepted voucher;

storing said at least one accepted voucher in said gaming machine;

retrieving vouchers from said gaming machine; and

comparing information regarding retrieved vouchers to information regarding accepted vouchers contained in said record.

2. The method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said gaming machine is arranged to accept bill monies and including the steps accepting at said gaming machine said voucher and bill monies.

3. The method in accordance with Claim 2 including the steps of retrieving said bill monies and said at least one voucher from said gaming machine and sorting said at least one voucher from said bill monies.

4. The method in accordance with Claim 1 including the step of reading information from said at least one voucher after said voucher is retrieved from said gaming machine.

5.   The method in accordance with Claim 4 wherein said step of reading comprises scanning a bar code associated with said voucher.

6.   The method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein multiple vouchers are accepted by said machine and said step of comparing comprises comparing the values of all vouchers accepted by said machine to the values of the vouchers retreived from the machine.

7.   The method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein each voucher has a unique identifying element and said comparing step comprises comparing said identifying element of each retreived voucher against identification information stored in said record of accepted vouchers.

8.   The method in accordance with Claim 1 including the step of reconciling said accepted vouchers with said retreived vouchers.

9.   In a gaming system including at least one gaming machine arranged to accept both bill monies and vouchers and store accepted bill monies and vouchers with one another, a soft count system for reconciling vouchers accepted by said at least one gaming machine with vouchers retreived by said at least one gaming machine comprising: at least one data storage element for storing data regarding accepted vouchers, including a value of said accepted vouchers, a sorting mechanism arranged to sort bill monies and vouchers retreived from said at least one gaming machine, and a scanner for reading information associated with said voucher.

10.   The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said sorting mechanism includes a high speed scanner.

11.   The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said sorting mechanism includes a bill sorter and a reject area and said sorting mechanism arranged to sort said vouchers into said reject area.

12.   The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said soft count system includes means for generating an image of at least one of said vouchers.

13.   The gaming system in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said soft count system includes at least one hand-held scanner.

14.   A method of reconciling vouchers and bill monies comprising:

crediting a value associated with an accepted voucher or bill;

retrieving intermingled vouchers and bills which have been credited;

sorting said vouchers from said bills; and

determining if a total value of said vouchers and bills comprises a total value credited for said accepted voucher or bill.

15.   The method in accordance with Claim 14 including storing said vouchers and bills after said crediting.

16.   The method in accordance with Claim 14 including the step of scanning said

vouchers to obtain value information associated with each voucher.

17.   A system in which a user is permitted to make payment in the form of bill monies or vouchers comprising:

5   at least one container for storing accepted bill monies and vouchers with one another;

at least one apparatus adapted to sort said vouchers from said bill monies retrieved from said at least one container;

at least one apparatus adapted to scan said vouchers to obtain value and identification information regarding each voucher; and

10   a computing device adapted to determine if a value of said sorted and scanned vouchers is the same as a value of said vouchers accepted to said container.

18.   The system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein an apparatus is adapted to sort said vouchers and bill monies and scan said vouchers.

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19.   The system in accordance with Claim 17 including at least one gaming machine, said gaming machine arranged to accept bill monies and vouchers and store said bill monies and vouchers in said at least one container.

20   20.   The system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said at least one voucher has a bar code printed thereon and said value and identification information is associated with said bar code.

21.   The system in accordance with Claim 20 wherein said at least one apparatus adapted

to scan comprises a laser-beam scanner for reading said bar code.

22.   The system in accordance with Claim 17 wherein said computing device comprises
a computer having information stored regarding the value of said accepted vouchers.

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